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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004278

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/08/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: ESTABLISHMENT SEETHES WHILE AK GOVERNMENT MAINTAINS MEASURED STANCE ON IRAQ INCIDENT

REF: A. ANKARA 4240

[1](#)B. ANKARA 4193

[1](#)C. ANKARA 4242

[1](#)D. ANKARA 618

[1](#)E. ANKARA 2122

[1](#)F. ANKARA 2521

[1](#)G. ANKARA 1350

[1](#)H. ANKARA 4252

(U) Classified by DCM Robert S. Deutsch. Reason:1.5(b)(d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Turkish press July 8 highlights the divide between the AK Government and military/Establishment over the recent arrest and release of Turkish troops by U.S. forces in Iraq. While AK insists on a measured response, the military's political/press allies continue a confrontational public line with the USG and accuse AK of being submissive ("teslimiyetci," a strong insult). End summary.

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TGS "Reproaches," AK Stakes Out Low-Key Approach  
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[1](#)2. (U) TGS Chief General Ozkok's statements to the press during his July 7 meeting with the Ambassador dominated the front pages of most dailies. The mainstream mass daily "Sabah" highlighted "the Commander's Reproach" -- Ozkok's criticism that the U.S. action has prompted "the most serious crisis of confidence with the U.S. military" in the past 50 plus years. Centrist-intellectual "Radikal" warned "this affair isn't over," asserting that if Turkey does not receive an "apology" from the U.S., "the TGS and the MFA (read: the diplomatic/bureaucratic corps) believe a visit by FonMin Gul to Washington would be meaningless." "Radikal" further implies that the TGS will consider "additional measures" if the crisis deepens, including the closure of Turkish airspace to U.S. overflights; the expulsion of U.S. military attaches; the public announcement of U.S. contacts with the PKK; and unspecified sanctions against the KDP and PUK.

[1](#)3. (U) Meanwhile, the AK Government's statements to the press continue to be decidedly more measured. F.M. Gul told reporters that he viewed the incident as an "isolated event" carried out at the initiative of "local" U.S. forces. Gul said both sides are making efforts to prevent damage to bilateral relations. Following a meeting of the Council of Ministers, Justice Minister/Government Spokesman Cicek criticized the political/Turkish State opposition for its "emotional" response, saying that the Government's responsibility is to work for a "realistic, responsible result." Cicek added that there had been no U.S. request for Turkish forces to leave Iraq, and asserted that the reason for Turkey's military presence there "has still not been eliminated."

[1](#)4. (C) Ali Bayramoglu, columnist in the Islam-oriented "Yeni Safak" that is closely tied to Erdogan, asserted July 8 that the crisis may well adversely affect the "process of civilianization" underway in Turkey. In parallel, July 7 and 8 national security analyst Faruk Demir and AK deputy party chairman for foreign affairs Disli affirmed to us separately that the Turkish military is using the incident more for the domestic purpose of striking at AK. Disli appealed for U.S. "moral support" for a government which, in the interests of maintaining the "essential strategic partnership" with the U.S., has exposed itself to heavy pressure from the Establishment, including charges that it is conceding (teslimiyetci) Turkish State interests and honor.

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More Claims of U.S. Contacts With PKK/KADEK  
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[1](#)5. (U) Mainstream "Milliyet" asserted on its front page that U.S. officials have met three times in recent weeks with representatives of PKK/KADEK. "Milliyet" also states that a

report on the contacts was presented and confirmed during the end-of-June meeting of Turkey's powerful National Security Council (NSC). The paper further asserts that the USG has been using the PKK/KADEK as a source of intelligence on Iran, and plans to use the PKK/KADEK as part of an effort to change the Iranian regime. Columnist Can Dundar, who has repeatedly been a conduit for anti-American stories (ref C), charged that instead of a strategic ally, the U.S. is quickly becoming the "Number One Threat" to Turkey.

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"Inhumane" Treatment Alleged by Detainees  
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16. (C) Television and print media continue to give prominent coverage to interviews with the released detainees, many of whom claimed mistreatment or even torture at the hands of U.S. soldiers. The detainees claimed that they were treated "just like al-Qaida members," and described being handcuffed and hooded, deprived of water, and beaten. Papers also reported that U.S. forces seized large amounts of documents and equipment during the raid, much of which has not been returned. Influential "Hurriyet" columnist Sedat Ergin, who is very close to the military, strongly criticized the treatment of Turkish detainees and urged F.M. Gul to cancel his planned trip to the United States.

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CHP: "Its Our Back Yard -- What Do You Expect?"  
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17. (C) Former Istanbul mayor/current M.P. Nurettin Sozen from CHP, the Establishmentarian party that leads the parliamentary opposition to P.M./AK leader Erdogan, offered to us privately that the Turkish military's recent activities reflect the policies it has pursued over the past decade in Iraq. Sozen asserted that, indeed, Turkish military activities in Iraq have nothing to do with USG efforts to administer the country, and everything to do with "protecting Turkish national interests." He acknowledged that the military may well have been up to "something" nefarious in N. Iraq, but asserted that the U.S. should have handled the affair "differently." Rather than bursting in on Turkish forces in a high-profile raid -- besmirching their "national honor" and generating front-page furor -- Sozen suggested that the USG would have been better served to discuss its concerns in diplomatic channels.

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Parliament Speaker Urges Calm, "Common Sense" Approach  
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18. (C) Ambassador Pearson paid a July 7 farewell call on Bulent Arinc, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and an AK leader who was a key opponent of the Government's failed March 1 resolution that would have authorized U.S. troop deployments through Turkey. Informing Arinc that the USG and GOT are establishing a joint committee to investigate the events, Ambassador also stated that the USG has good reason to be concerned about the activities of the apprehended Turkish soldiers. Arinc thanked the Ambassador, observing that the importance of getting a clear picture and explanation of what happened before the Turkish people; otherwise, the "anti-Americanists" in the press and elsewhere would continue to try to foment a crisis. Arinc noted that the opposition parties are attacking the AK Government for failing to take a hard-line stance. He asserted that even stronger, and more serious, opposition to the AK Government's approach is emanating from "certain circles" -- meaning the Turkish military -- which he charged are motivated by an effort to see AK worn out and brought down.

19. (U) In a statement to the press afterwards, Arinc observed that the investigation should identify whoever was responsible for whatever happened in Iraq. He emphasized that the incident should not be "exploited" for political gain; nor, he admonished, should anyone "create the expectation" that the U.S. and Turkey "should become enemies; common sense should prevail."

PEARSON